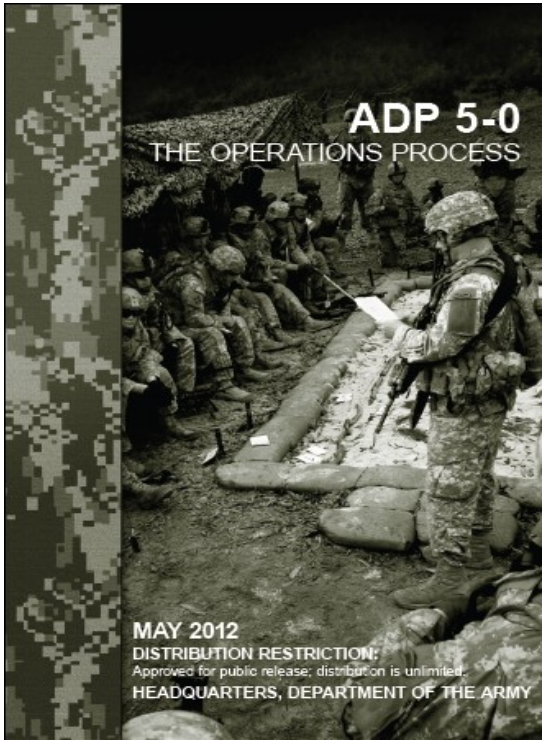
The Operations Process



Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate

Purpose

To provide an overview of the operations process

Outline

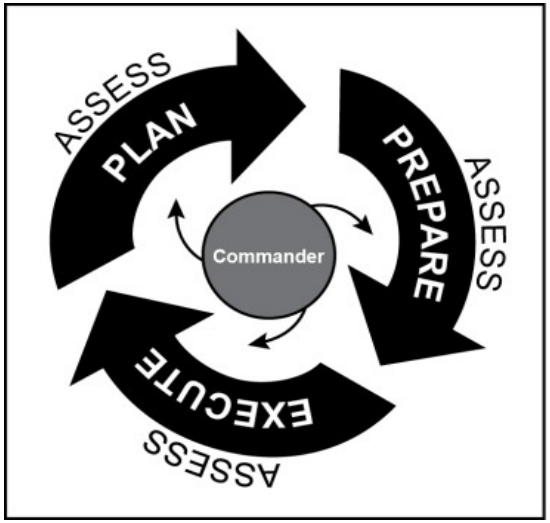
- Central idea
- Fundamentals of the operations process
- Planning
- Preparing
- Executing
- Assessing
- Summary of changes

Central Idea

The Army's framework for exercising mission command is the **operations process**—the major mission command activities performed during operations: planning, preparing, executing, and continuously assessing the operation.

Central Idea…

Commanders, supported by their staffs, use the operations process to drive the conceptual and detailed planning necessary to understand, visualize, and describe their operational environment; make and articulate decisions; and direct, lead, and assess military operations.

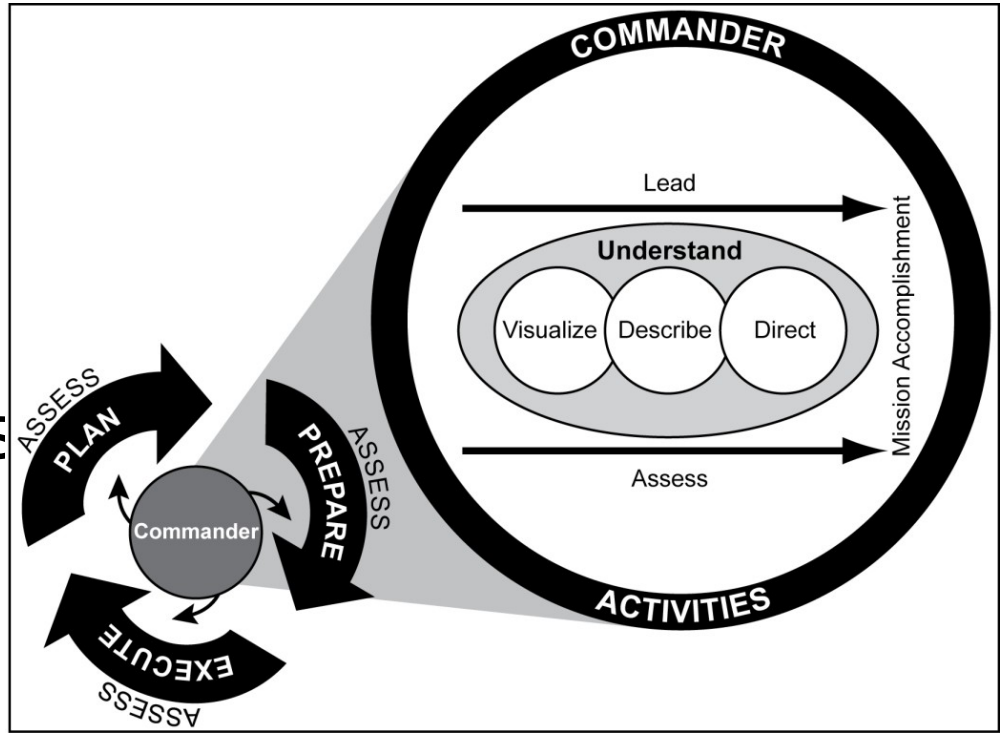


Guided by the principles of…

- Commanders drive the operations process
- Apply critical and creative thinking
- Build and maintain situational understanding
- Encourage collaboration and dialogue

Fundamentals of The Operations Process

- Principles
- Integrating processes
- Continuing activities
- Battle rhythm
- Running estimates



Principles of the Operations Process

In addition to the principles of mission command, commanders and staffs consider the following principles for the effective use of the operations process—

Principles of mission command

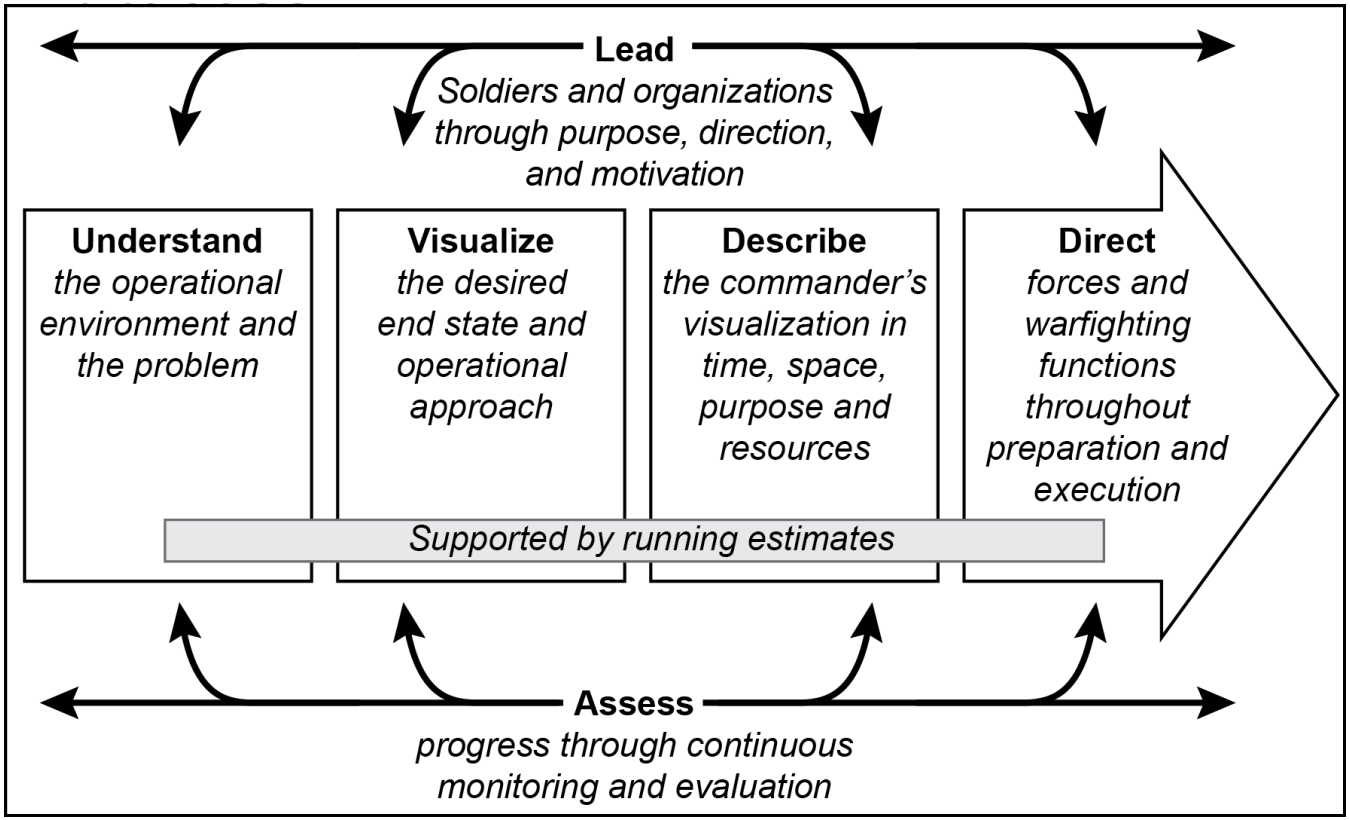
- Build cohesive teams through mutual trust
- Create shared understanding
- Provide a clear commander's intent
- Exercise disciplined initiative
- Use mission orders
- Accept prudent risk

Principles of the Operations Process

- Commanders drive the operations process
- Build and maintain situational understanding
- Apply critical and creative thinking.
- Encourage collaboration and dialogue.

Principles of the Operations Process

Commanders drive the operations

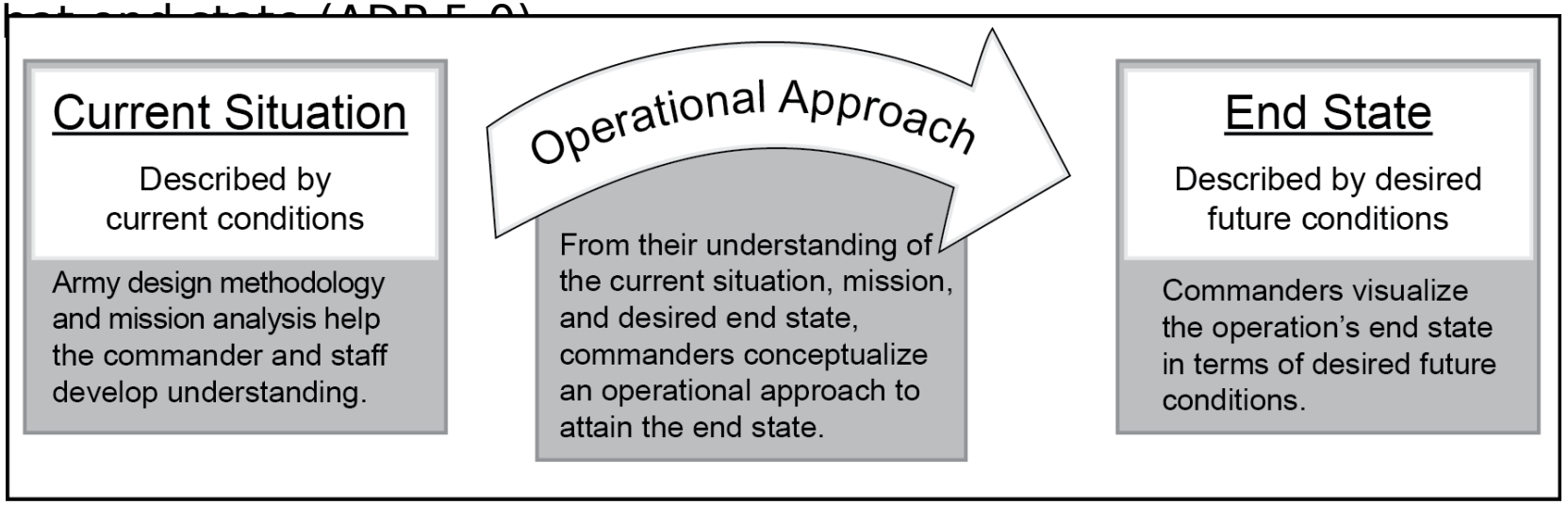

Lead
Soldiers and organizations through purpose, direction, and motivation
Understand
the operational environment and the problem
Visualize
the desired end state and operational approach
Describe
the commander's visualization in time, space, purpose and resources
Direct
forces and warfighting functions throughout preparation and execution
Supported by running estimates
Assess
progress through continuous monitoring and evaluation

Commanders are the most important participants in the operations process. While staffs perform essential functions that amplify the effectiveness of operations, commanders drive the operations process through ***understanding***, ***visualizing***, ***describing***, ***directing***, ***leading***, and ***assessing*** operations.

Commander's Drive the Operatons Process

Commander's Visualization

Commander's visualization is the mental process of developing situational understanding, determining a desired end state, and envisioning an operational approach by which the force will achieve t


Current Situation
Described by current conditions
Army design methodology and mission analysis help the commander and staff develop understanding.
Operational Approach
From their understanding of the current situation, mission, and desired end state, commanders conceptualize an operational approach to attain the end state.
End State
Described by desired future conditions
Commanders visualize the operation's end state in terms of desired future conditions.

Commanders ***describe*** their visualization in terms of —

- Commander's intent.
- Planning guidance, including an operational approach.
- Commander's critical information requirements.
- Essential elements of friendly information.

Commander's Drive the Operatons Process

Commander's Intent

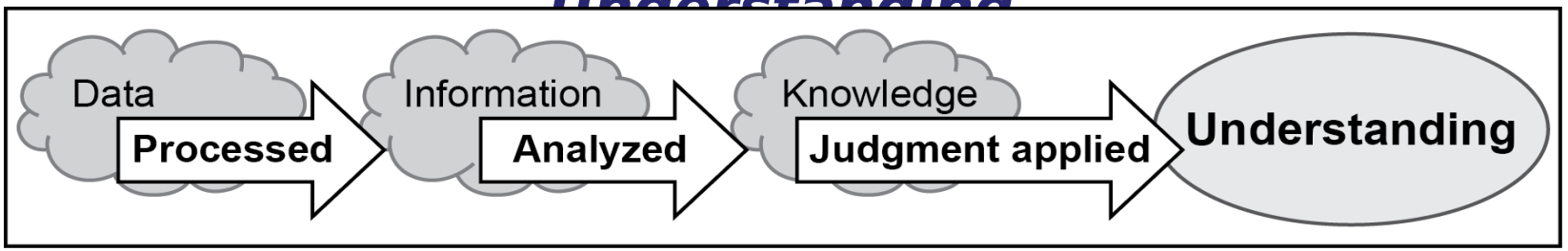
The ***commander's intent*** is a clear and concise expression of the purpose of the operation and the desired military end state that supports mission command, provides focus to the staff, and helps subordinate and supporting commanders act to achieve the commander's desired results without further orders, even when the operation does not unfold as planned (JP 3-0).

The commander's intent includes:

- **Purpose** - an expanded description of the operation's purpose beyond the "why" of the mission statement.
- **Key tasks** – those significant activities the force as a whole must perform to achieve the desired end state.
- **End state** – a description of the desired future conditions that represent success.

Principles of the Operations Process

Build and Maintain Situational Understanding



Situational understanding is the product of applying analysis and judgment to relevant information to determine the relationships among the operational and mission variables to facilitate decisionmaking (ADP 5-0).

Operation Variables

- Political
- Military
- Economic
- Social
- Information
- Infrastructure
- Physical environment
- Time

Mission Variables

- Mission
- Enemy
- Terrain and weather
- Troops and support available
- Time available
- Civil considerations

Principles of the Operations Process

Apply Critical and Creative Thinking

To assist commanders in understanding and decisionmaking, commanders and staffs apply critical and creative thinking throughout the operations process.

Critical Thinking

Purposeful and reflective judgment about what to believe or what to do in response to observations, experience, verbal or written expressions, or arguments.

Creative Thinking

Vision and imagination that leads to new insights, novel approaches, fresh perspectives, and new ways of understanding and conceiving ideas.

Principles of the Operations Process

Encourage Collaboration and Dialog

Collaboration and dialogue aids in developing shared understanding throughout the force and with unified action partners.

Collaboration

Two or more people or organizations working together toward common goals by sharing knowledge and building consensus.

Dialogue

A way to collaborate that involves the candid exchange of ideas or opinion among participants that encourages frank discussion in areas of disagreement.

Integrating Processes

Commanders and staff use several integrating process and continuing activities throughout the operations process.

Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield

- Define the operational environment
- Describe environmental effects on operations
- Evaluate the threat
- Determine threat courses of action

Risk Management

- Identify hazards
- Assess hazards to determine risks
- Develop controls and make risk decisions
- Implement controls
- Supervise and evaluate

Targeting

- Decide
- Detect
- Deliver
- Assess

Continuing Activities

While units execute numerous tasks throughout the operations process, commanders and staffs always plan for and coordinate the following continuing activities:

- Liaison
- Information collection
- Security operations
- Protection
- Terrain management
- Airspace control

Battle Rhythm

Battle rhythm is a deliberate daily cycle of command, staff, and unit activities intended to synchronize current and future operations (JP 3-33).

Within the operations process, commanders and staffs must integrate and synchronize numerous activities, meetings, and reports within their headquarters, with their higher headquarters, and with subordinate units. They do this by establishing the unit's battle rhythm.

An effective battle rhythm—

- Establishes a routine for staff interaction and coordination.
- Facilitates interaction between the commander, staff, and subordinate units.
- Facilitates planning by the staff and decisionmaking by the commander.

Running Estimate

A ***running estimate*** is the continuous assessment of the current situation used to determine if the current operation is proceeding according to the commander's intent and if planned future operations are supportable (ADP 5-0).

The commander and each staff section maintain a running estimate. In their running estimates, the commander and each staff section continuously consider the effects of new information and update the following:

- Facts
- Assumptions
- Friendly force status
- Enemy activities and capabilities
- Civil considerations
- Conclusions and recommendations

Planning

Planning is the art and science of understanding a situation, envisioning a desired future, and laying out effective ways of bringing that future about (ADP 5-0).

- Understand and develop solutions to problems.
- Anticipate events and adapt to changing circumstances.
- Task-organize the force and prioritize efforts.

Value of Planning

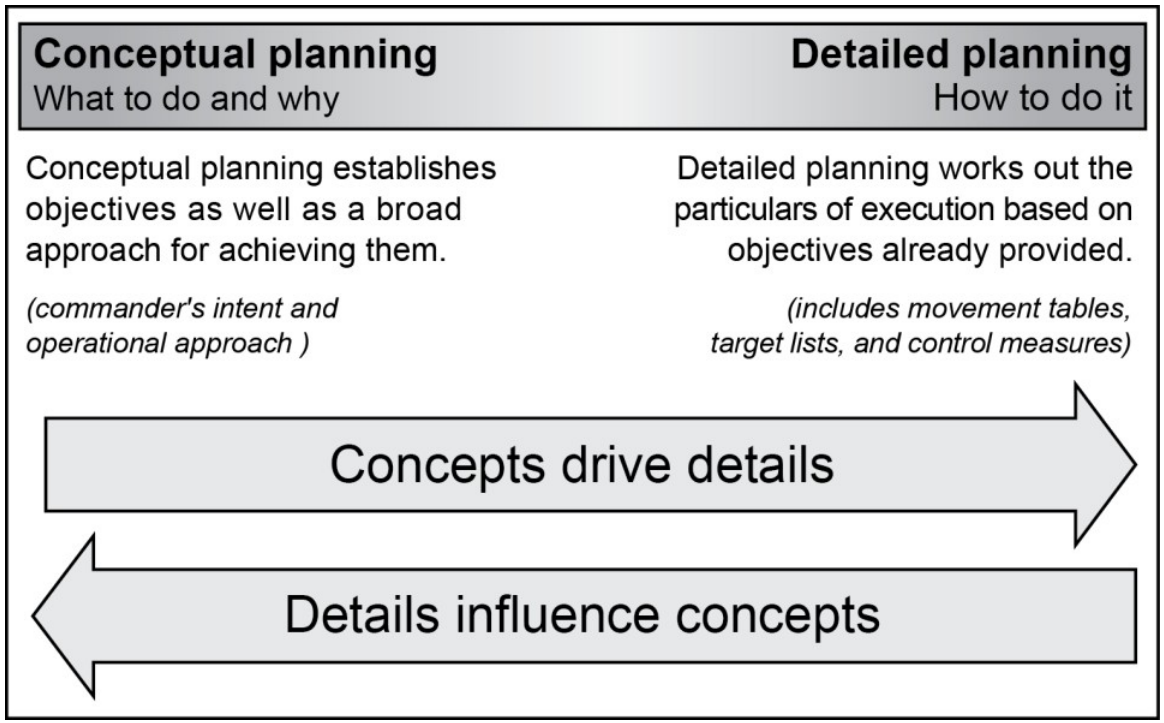
- Commanders focus planning.
- Develop simple, flexible plans through mission orders.
- Optimize available planning time.
- Continually refine the plan.

Guidelines for effective planning

Planning results in a plan or order that synchronize the action of forces in time, space, and purpose to achieve objectives and accomplish missions.

Integrated Planning

Understanding the operational environment and the problem, determining the operation's end state, establishing objectives, and sequencing the operation in broad terms all illustrate conceptual planning.


Conceptual planning
What to do and why
Detailed planning
How to do it
Conceptual planning establishes objectives as well as a broad approach for achieving them.
(commander's intent and operational approach)
Detailed planning works out the particulars of execution based on objectives already provided.
(includes movement tables, target lists, and control measures)
Concepts drive details
Details influence concepts

Detailed planning translates the broad operational approach into a complete and practical plan.

Planning and Operational Art

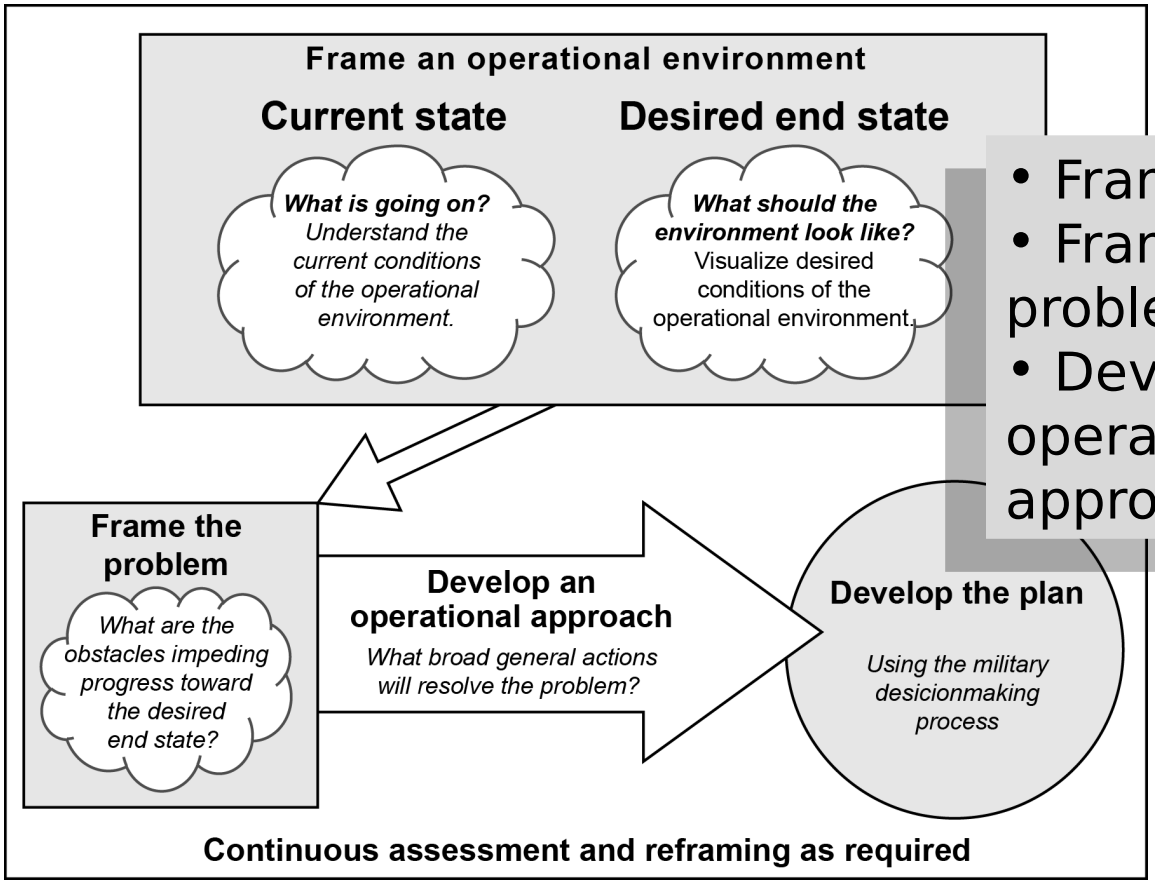
Conceptual planning is associated with operational art. *Operational art* is the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment—to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means (JP 3-0).

- End state and conditions
- Center of gravity
- Decisive points
- Lines of operations and lines of effort
- Operational reach
- Basing
- Tempo
- Phasing and transitions
- Culmination
- Risk

Elements of operational art

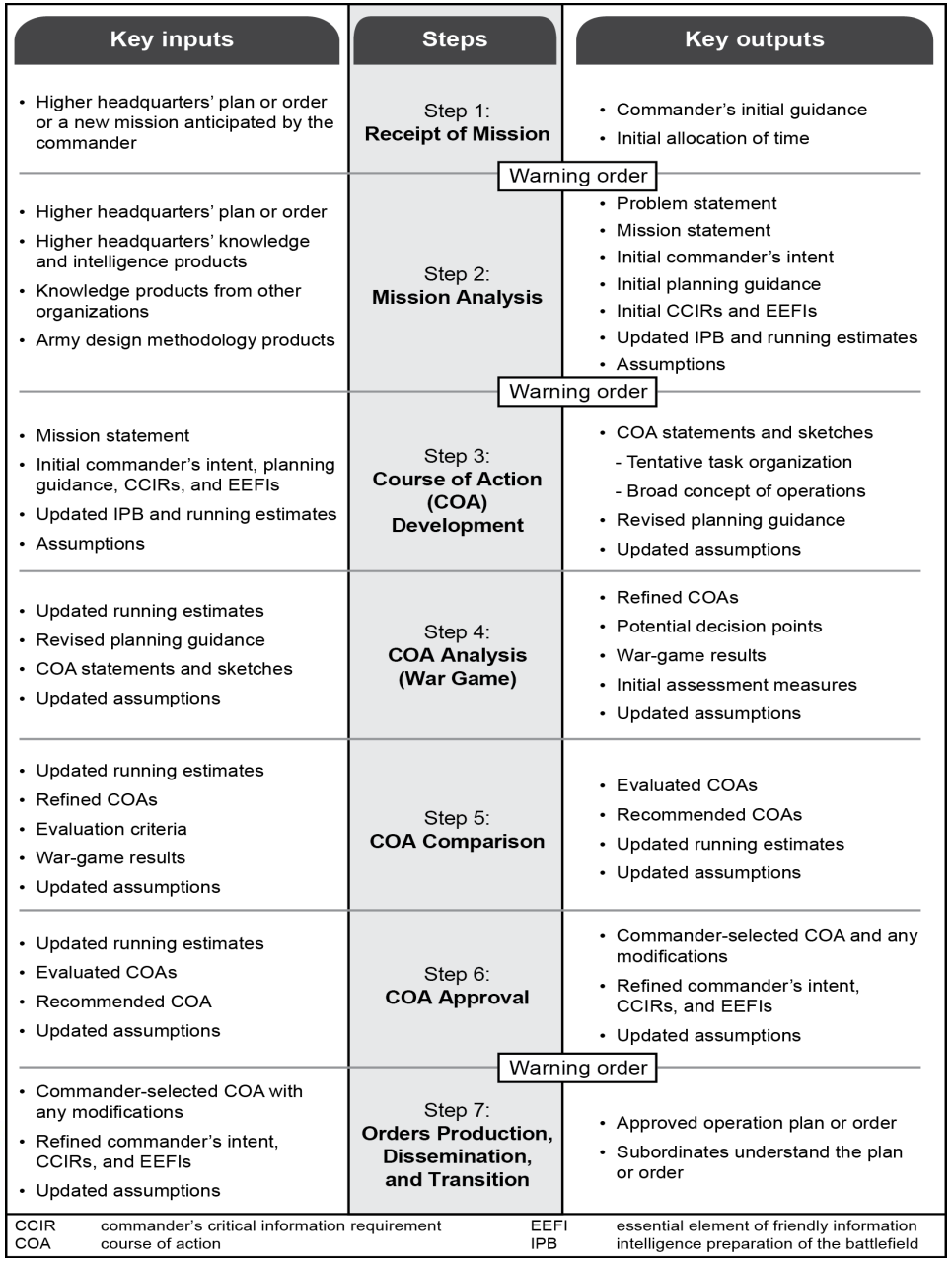
Army Design Methodology

Army design methodology is a methodology for applying critical and creative thinking to understand, visualize, and describe problems and approaches to solving them (ADP 5-0).


Frame an operational environment
Current state
What is going on?
Understand the current conditions of the operational environment.
Desired end state
What should the environment look like?
Visualize desired conditions of the operational environment.
Frame the problem
What are the obstacles impeding progress toward the desired end state?
Develop an operational approach
What broad general actions will resolve the problem?
Develop the plan
Using the military desicionmaking process
Continuous assessment and reframing as required

- Frame the OE
- Frame the problem
- Develop an operational approach

Military Decisionmaking Process



Key inputs	Steps	Key outputs
• Higher headquarters' plan or order or a new mission anticipated by the commander	Step 1: **Receipt of Mission**	• Commander's initial guidance • Initial allocation of time
	Warning order	
• Higher headquarters' plan or order • Higher headquarters' knowledge and intelligence products • Knowledge products from other organizations • Army design methodology products	Step 2: **Mission Analysis**	• Problem statement • Mission statement • Initial commander's intent • Initial planning guidance • Initial CCIRs and EEFIs • Updated IPB and running estimates • Assumptions
	Warning order	
• Mission statement • Initial commander's intent, planning guidance, CCIRs, and EEFIs • Updated IPB and running estimates • Assumptions	Step 3: **Course of Action (COA) Development**	• COA statements and sketches - Tentative task organization - Broad concept of operations • Revised planning guidance • Updated assumptions
• Updated running estimates • Revised planning guidance • COA statements and sketches • Updated assumptions	Step 4: **COA Analysis (War Game)**	• Refined COAs • Potential decision points • War-game results • Initial assessment measures • Updated assumptions
• Updated running estimates • Refined COAs • Evaluation criteria • War-game results • Updated assumptions	Step 5: **COA Comparison**	• Evaluated COAs • Recommended COAs • Updated running estimates • Updated assumptions
• Updated running estimates • Evaluated COAs • Recommended COA • Updated assumptions	Step 6: **COA Approval**	• Commander-selected COA and any modifications • Refined commander's intent, CCIRs, and EEFIs • Updated assumptions
	Warning order	
• Commander-selected COA with any modifications • Refined commander's intent, CCIRs, and EEFIs • Updated assumptions	Step 7: **Orders Production, Dissemination, and Transition**	• Approved operation plan or order • Subordinates understand the plan or order

CCIR commander's critical information requirement
COA course of action
EEFI essential element of friendly information
IPB intelligence preparation of the battlefield

The *military decisionmaking process* is an iterative planning methodology to understand the situation and mission, develop a course of action, and produce an operation plan or order (ADP 5-0).

The military decisionmaking process (MDMP) integrates the activities of the commander, staff, subordinate headquarters, and unified action partners to understand the situation and mission; develop and compare courses of action; decide on a course of action that best accomplishes the mission; and produce an operation plan or order for execution.

Preparation

Preparation consists of those activities performed by units and Soldiers to improve their ability to execute an operation (ADP 5-0).

Continue to coordinate and conduct liaison	Conduct rehearsals
Initiate information collection	Conduct plans-to-operations transitions
Initiate security operations	Refine the plan
Initiate troop movement	Integrate new Soldiers and units
Initiate sustainment preparations	Complete task organization
Initiate network preparations	Train
Manage terrain	Perform pre-operations checks and inspections
Prepare terrain	Continue to build partnerships and teams
Conduct confirmation briefs	

Preparation activities

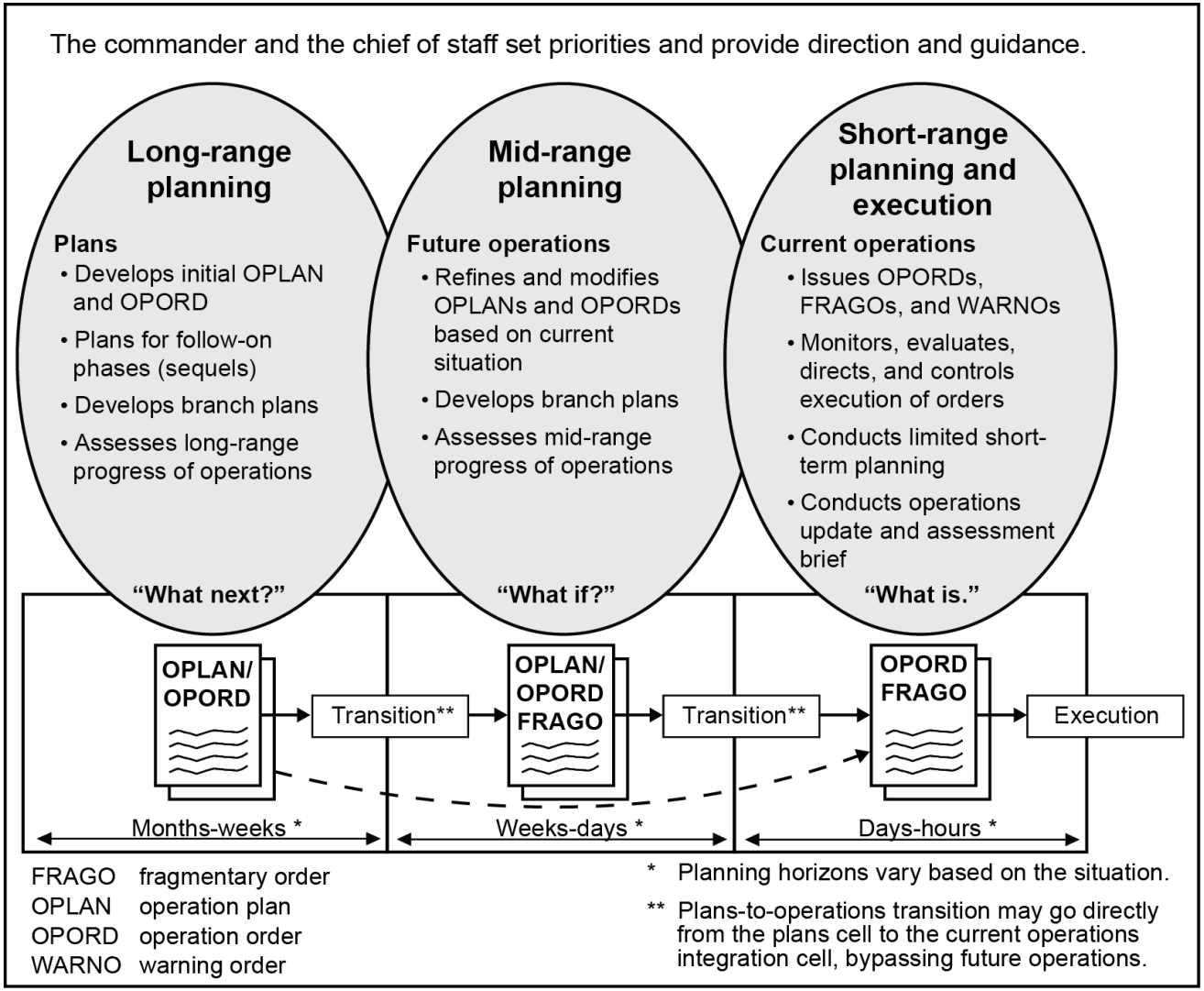
Preparation

Preparation requires commander, staff, unit, and Soldier actions to ensure the force is trained, equipped, and ready to execute operations. Preparation activities help commanders, staffs, and Soldiers understand a situation and their roles in upcoming operations.

- Secure and protect the force.
- Improve situational understanding.
- Understand, rehearse, and refine the plan.
- Integrate, organize, and configure the force.
- Ensure forces and resources are ready and positioned.

Preparation guidelines

Plan-to-Ops Transition


The commander and the chief of staff set priorities and provide direction and guidance.
Long-range planning
Plans
• Develops initial OPLAN and OPORD
• Plans for follow-on phases (sequels)
• Develops branch plans
• Assesses long-range progress of operations
"What next?"
Mid-range planning
Future operations
• Refines and modifies OPLANs and OPORDs based on current situation
• Develops branch plans
• Assesses mid-range progress of operations
"What if?"
Short-range planning and execution
Current operations
• Issues OPORDs, FRAGOs, and WARNOs
• Monitors, evaluates, directs, and controls execution of orders
• Conducts limited short-term planning
• Conducts operations update and assessment brief
"What is."
OPLAN/ OPORD
Transition**
OPLAN/ OPORD FRAGO
Transition**
OPORD FRAGO
Execution
Months-weeks *
Weeks-days *
Days-hours *
FRAGO fragmentary order
OPLAN operation plan
OPORD operation order
WARNO warning order
* Planning horizons vary based on the situation.
** Plans-to-operations transition may go directly from the plans cell to the current operations integration cell, bypassing future operations.

Execution

Execution is putting a plan into action by applying combat power to accomplish the mission (ADP 5-0).

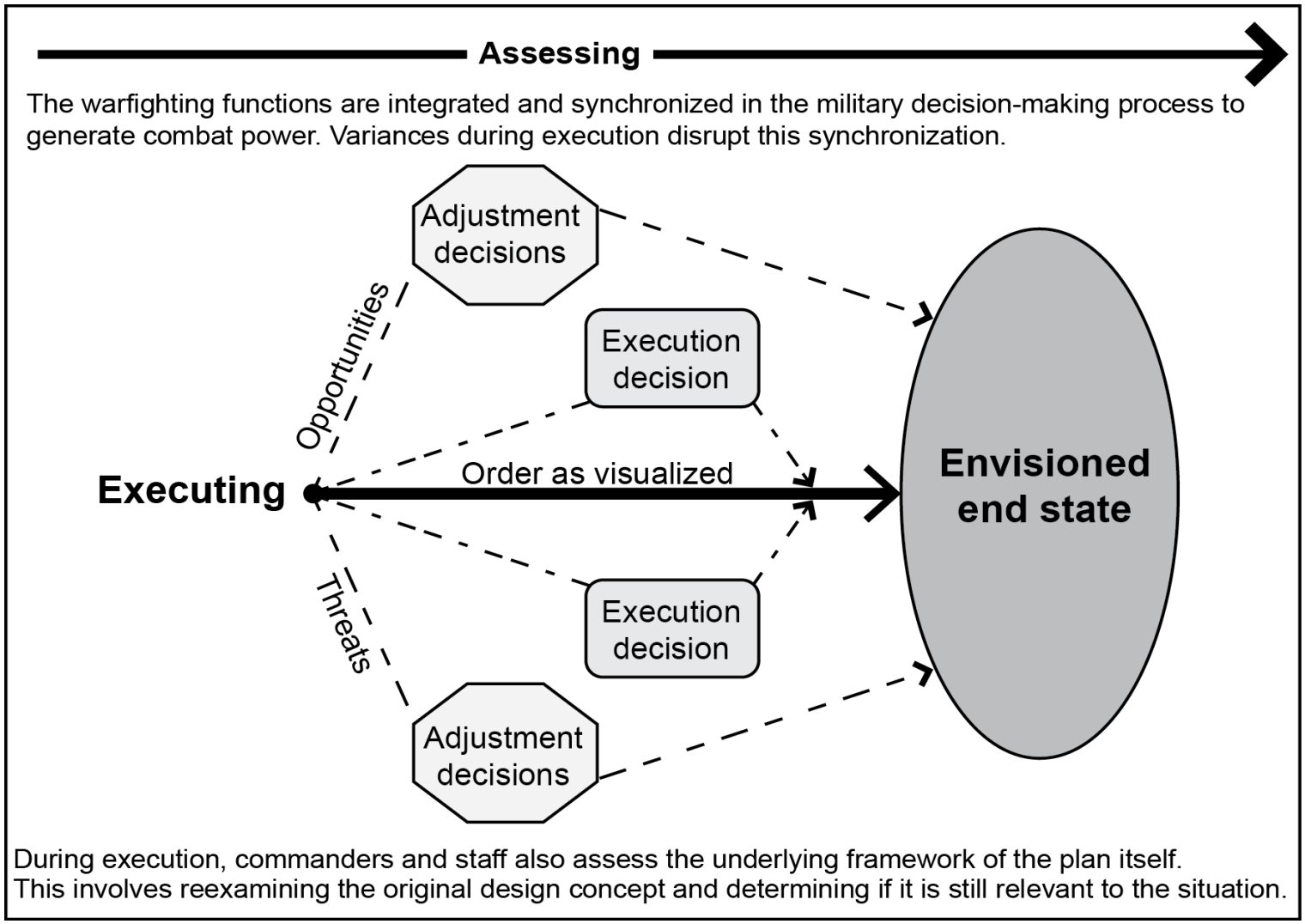
In execution, commanders focus their efforts on translating decisions into actions to accomplish the mission.

- Seize the initiative through action.
- Accept prudent risk to exploit opportunities.

Execution guidelines

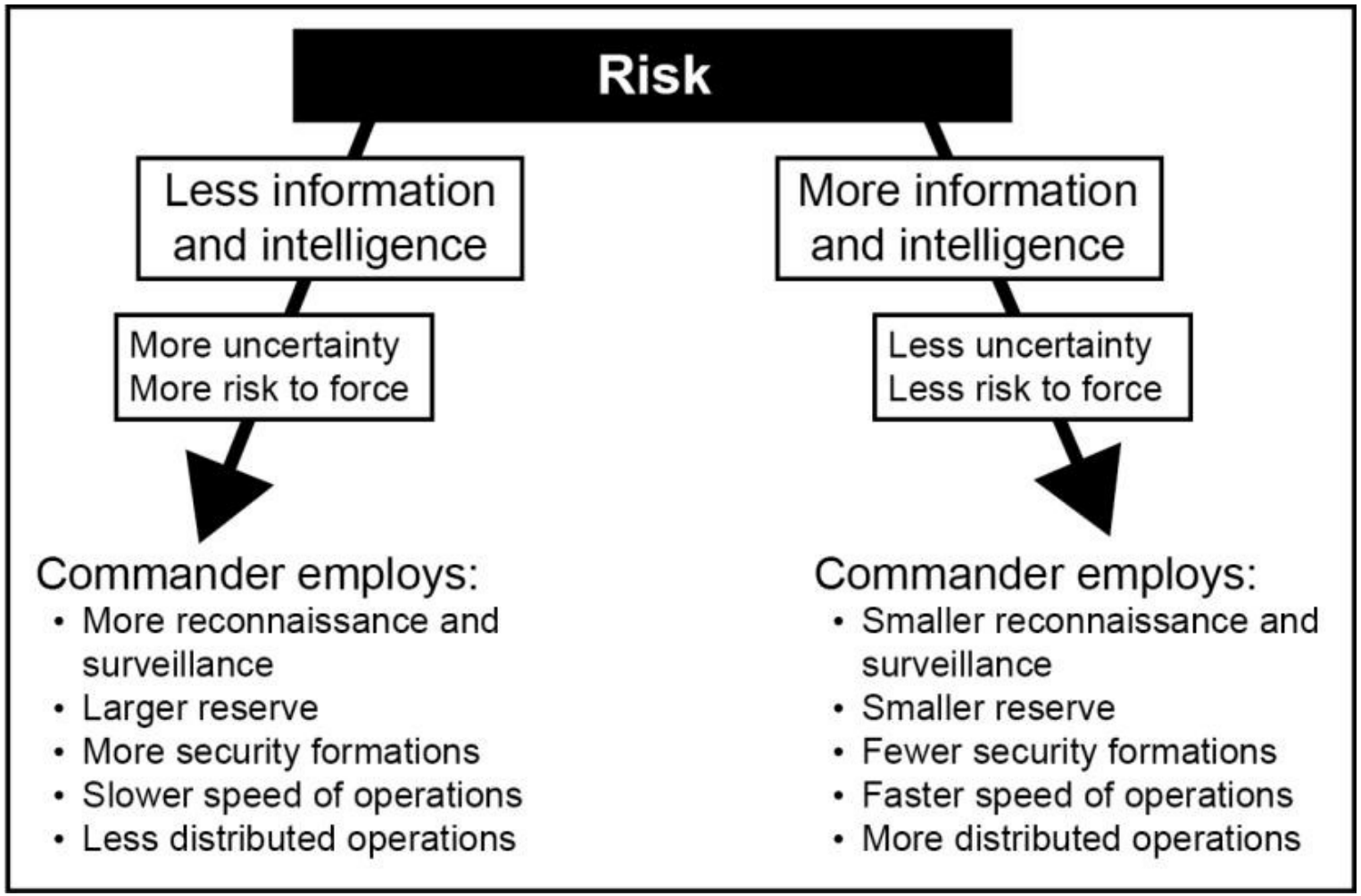
*

Decisionmaking During Execution


Assessing
The warfighting functions are integrated and synchronized in the military decision-making process to generate combat power. Variances during execution disrupt this synchronization.
Adjustment decisions
Opportunities
Execution decision
Executing
Order as visualized
Envisioned end state
Execution decision
Threats
Adjustment decisions
During execution, commanders and staff also assess the underlying framework of the plan itself.
This involves reexamining the original design concept and determining if it is still relevant to the situation.

Decisions during execution

Accept Prudent Risk



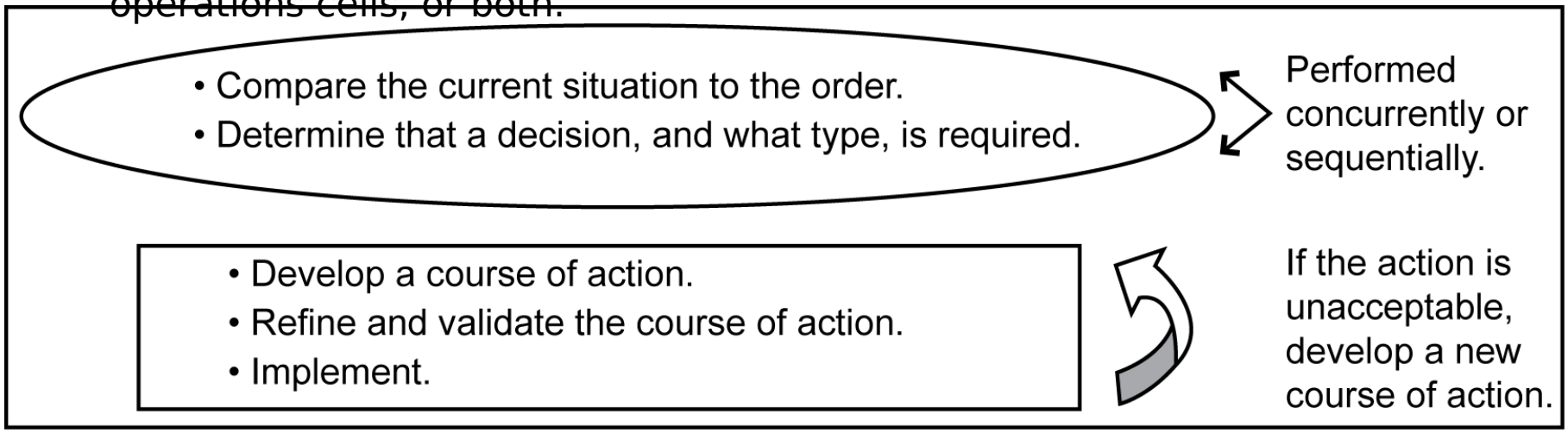
Risk reduction factors

Rapid Decisionmaking

The RDSP is a decisionmaking and synchronization technique that commanders and staffs commonly use during execution.

When using this technique, the following considerations apply:

- ***Rapid*** is often more important than *process*.
- Much of it may be mental rather than written.
- It should become a battle drill for the current operations integration cells, future operations cells, or both.

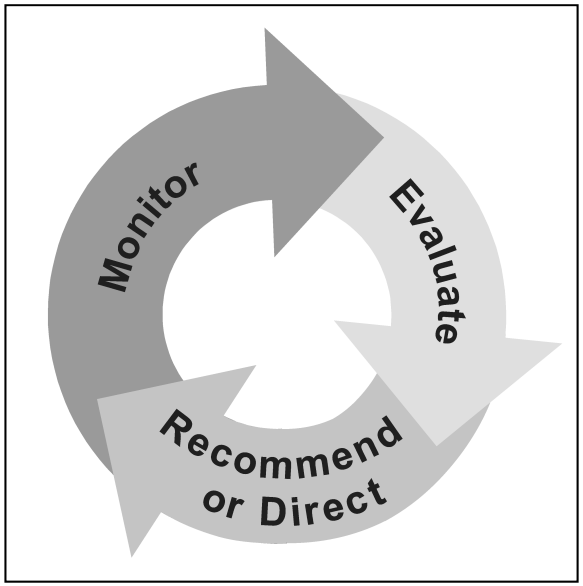

• Compare the current situation to the order.
• Determine that a decision, and what type, is required.
Performed concurrently or sequentially.
• Develop a course of action.
• Refine and validate the course of action.
• Implement.
If the action is unacceptable, develop a new course of action.

Rapid decisionmaking and synchronization process (RDSP)

Assessment

Assessment is the determination of the progress toward accomplishing a task, creating an effect, or achieving an objective (JP 3-0).

Monitoring *is continuous observation of those conditions relevant to the current operation.*

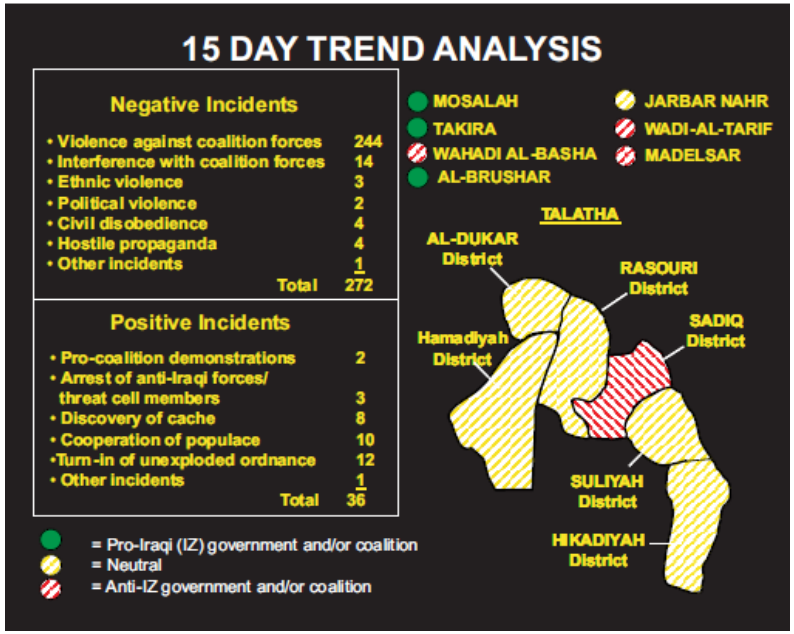


Evaluating *is using criteria to judge progress toward desired conditions and determining why the current degree of progress exists.*

Recommending or Directing *Commanders integrate recommendations from the staff, subordinate commanders, and other organizations with their personal assessment. From those recommendations, they decide if and how to modify the operation to better accomplish the mission.*

Considerations for Effective Assessment

Assessment precedes and guides the other activities of the operations process. Assessment involves deliberately comparing forecasted outcomes with actual events to determine the overall effectiveness of force employment.



- Assessment is continuous.
- Commanders prioritize the assessment effort.
- Use caution when establishing cause and effect.
- Combine quantitative and qualitative

Assessment guides

Assessment Terms

A *measure of performance* is a criterion used to assess friendly actions that is tied to measuring task accomplishment (JP 3-0).

A *measure of effectiveness* is a criterion used to assess changes in system behavior, capability, or operational environment that is tied to measuring the attainment of an end state, achievement of an objective, or creation of an effect (JP 3-0).

In the context of assessment, **an *indicator*** is an item of information that provides insight into a measure of effectiveness or measure of

Answers the question: Are we doing the right things?	Answers the question: Are we doing things right?	Answers the questio of this MOE or MOP
Measures purpose accomplishment.	Measures task completion.	Measures raw data i MOEs and MOPs.
Measures *why* in the mission statement.	Measures *what* in the mission statement.	Information used to what or why possible
No hierarchical relationship to MOPs.	No hierarchical relationship to MOEs.	Subordinate to MOE
Often formally tracked in formal assessment plans.	Often formally tracked in execution matrixes.	Often formally tracke assessment plans.

Assessment measures and indicators

Develop a Formal Assessment Plan

Developing the assessment plan occurs during planning—not after the fact.

Step 1 – Gather tools and assessment data.

Step 2 – Understand current and desired conditions.

Step 3 – Develop assessment measures and potential indicators.

Step 4 – Develop the collection plan.

Step 5 – Assign responsibilities for generating recommendations.

Step 6 – Identify feedback mechanisms.

Assessing progress*

Summary of Changes from FM 5-0

- Updates doctrine on the operations process to account for unified land operations and mission command.

- Moves the details for conducting planning, preparation, execution, and assessment to ATTP 5-0.1 (and eventually FM 6-0).

- Associates the Army design methodology (formerly know as design) to the conceptual aspects of planning.

- Adopts joint terms whenever possible (e.g. commanders intent, assessment, risk management, operational approach).

Summary of Changes

Introductory table-1. New Army terms

Term	*Remarks*
Army design methodology	Replaces *design*.

Introductory table-2. Modified Army terms

Term	*Remarks*
assessment	Adopts the joint definition.
design	Formal definition replaced by *Army design methodology*.
direct support	Modifies the definition.
general support-reinforcing	Modifies the definition.
military decisionmaking process	Modifies the definition.
operational approach	Adopts the joint definition.
planning	Modifies the definition modified.